

Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SELLS FLOTO CIRCUS
SECOND LARGEST SHOW IN THE WORLD

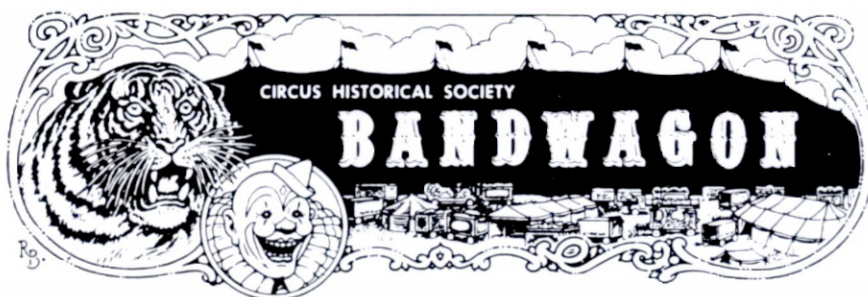


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THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Joseph T. Bradbury and Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editors

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The 1921 Sells-Floto Circus litho reproduced on the cover was designed and printed by the Strobbridge Lithograph Co. It was a six sheet.

This poster and the others illustrating the 1921 Sells-Floto article in this issue have been reproduced from the official photo record cards of the Strobbridge firm. These 5 x 7" photos are from the Harold Dunn collection. The year and size of the poster is stamped on the back of each photo.

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CHS DUES INCREASED

Inflation has taken its toll in the operation of the Circus Historical Society, and its principal activity, the publication of the BANDWAGON.

Printing and postage costs have skyrocketed, and now with the severe rise in the cost of photographic film used in making the printing plates, due to increased silver prices, we must raise the dues and subscription prices.

Many members have expressed an interest in helping beyond their annual dues. This year two new membership categories have been introduced to give the CHS additional financial help. Your dues statement will show a Sustaining Membership at \$25.00 and a Contributing Membership at \$50.00, per year. Both of these include the regular membership or subscription cost, with the extra amount going into the general operating account.

When you soon receive your dues and subscription notice for the year starting May 1, 1980, the regular dues will be \$13.50 in the United States and \$15.00 outside this country. Those who wish can go further in helping the organization by becoming Sustaining or Contributing members. Your officers and directors feel the BANDWAGON continues to be a bargain at the new rate, and trust that you will agree.

CHS BARABOO CONVENTION

Plans are firming up for an outstanding program for the annual convention of the Circus Historical Society in Baraboo, Wis., on July 5, 6 and 7, 1980.

The highlight will be the horse drawn circus parade to be presented by the Circus World Museum on July 5.

It is vital that all who plan to attend make motel reservations at once as sleeping space is very tight. You are urged to make your plans and reservations at once.

P.M. McClintock

We'll be getting no more letters in that expansive scrawl on motel stationery from Box 891 in Franklin, Pa. On 17 January 1980 Plumer Mercedes McClintock, the king of the circosiana dealers, died. In his own way he was as responsible as anyone for the preservation of circus material. Working out of a store that resembled the Library of Congress after a hurricane, he ferreted out circus material and sold it to both private and public collections for over forty years. He was instrumental in building many great collections including those of Bill Kasiska, Don Smith, Bill Woodcock, Fred Pfening, and Harry Hertzberg.

His three greatest triumphs may well have been his acquisition from the Strobridge and Erie Lithograph Companies, and his trades with Princeton University for the duplicates of the McCaddon collection. Had it not been for his efforts, the Strobridge and Erie correspondence and printed material may well have been destroyed, and certainly Forepaugh, Barnum route books, and many other items relating to James A. Bailey would be much rarer had he not acquired those at Princeton. He was still selling material from these sources as late as thirty years after obtaining them.

He also put material in general circulation from collections acquired from many old troupers including the Welsh Bros., Pete Sun, Fred Kerslake and others. Always a man with a sharp eye for the main chance, he sold letters from old showmen who wrote him they had nothing they wished to part with.

His other great contribution was the hundreds of old parade and lot scenes he sold over the years. These pictures provided historians with invaluable information, his set of the 1887 Forepaugh parade in Lansing, Michigan, being perhaps the most famous.

Through his contacts in the antique world, he handled a remarkable amount of material over the years. Had he collected and not dealt, he would have surely had one of the two or three finest collections ever. As late as the mid-1970's he was peddling a group of lithos from the 1880's, and in the 1960's he offered such prizes as an 1842 June Titus and Angevine route book for sale. To McClintock these items rated his highest accolade: museum pieces.

He acted more like a circus press agent than an antique dealer, and often addressed customers as "highpockets" or "uptown". He always poor mouthed himself, and complained that everybody was copying his pictures leaving him

nothing to sell. Despite his protestations about being broke all the time, he would often write "Sorry about being late in answering, but was in New Orleans to see the Sugar Bowl."

He was one of a kind and we'll miss him. He was the last survivor of the big collectors of the 1930's. One imagines him in heaven with Charles Bernard, Spencer Chambers, and Morton Smith telling them how they always beat him out of choice material, and how he somehow always got the short end of trades. Don't believe him boys, more important circus material passed through old P.M.'s hands than the rest of you put together.

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WINTER QUARTERS
DENVER, COLO.

A HISTORY OF THE SELLS-FLOTO CIRCUS FOR THE SEASONS OF 1921 AND 1922

by Gordon M. Carver

Foreword

For reasons not now apparent information concerning the Sells-Floto Circus for the seasons of 1921 and 1922 was scarce and hard to find from the usual sources. This show, the largest of those owned and operated by what was to become the American Circus Corporation, seemed to be one of the least reported and recorded, at least during these years. Were it not for the help of Joe Bradbury and Fred Pfening adequate and interesting coverage of this show for these two years would have been virtually impossible. Besides programs and pictures that these two fine circus historians were able to supply, they were able to give me the records kept by Isaac Marks, J. A. Havirland, and Bill Woodcock, Sr. who had accumulated a wealth of circus data while they were still alive. I also want to thank Bob Boyer for the use of his marvelous collection of Sells-Floto Circus posters from the 1920s. And finally I must thank Chang Reynolds for all of his data on the Sells-Floto elephants, much more than I could find room for.

The year 1921 saw Sells-Floto Circus start its 20th season, now under the new management and ownership of Jerry Mugivan, Bert Bowers, and Edward Ballard. These men were already the owners of four other shows, Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, John Robinson Circus, Howes Great London Circus and Yankee Robinson Circus. With the addition of the Sells-Floto show to their roster there was no question that they were the equals of the Ringlings in the ownership of circus equipment, if not in power and recognition. And the Sells-Floto Circus was to be the principal rival of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows for patronage. With its size on the lot it would be virtually indistinguishable from the "Big One" to the average circus goer. They

both had six pole big tops and menagerie tops, although those of Sells-Floto covered somewhat less in area.

In the spring of 1921 the five circuses owned by Mugivan, Bowers and Ballard were all in winter quarters spread about the mid-west, Hagenbeck-Wallace in West Baden, Indiana, John Robinson in Peru, Indiana, Howes Great London and Yankee Robinson, purchased late in 1920, at Hall's Circus Farm in Lancaster, Missouri, and Sells-Floto in its old location of Denver, Colorado. This combination of owners would put out four shows in 1921. The Howes Great London was increased from 15 to 25 cars with the added equipment coming from the Yankee Robinson show. The remaining Yankee Robinson equipment was sold, mostly to Palmer Bros. Circus. With all this show property on hand it was only natural that some switching of property between shows would occur. So that Howes Great London could have an air calliope, one was sent from Sells-Floto to Lancaster. Evidently Sells-Floto had an excess of musical parade wagons of various kinds. Col. Bill Woodcock once said that when he saw the Sells-Floto Circus in 1917 the parade had two air calliopes, one steam calliope, one unafon and one organ wagon.

In February 1921 Howes Great London Circus had purchased a male hippo, "Little Vic", a 600 pound animal, from the Washington, D.C., zoo. This same hippo later became the great "Victor". Howes had no suitable cage for this animal but Sells-Floto did have one that was surplus. So the Sells-Floto cage was

Camel team pulling Sells-Floto polar bear cage No. 50 inside the Chicago Coliseum in 1921. P.M. McClintock collection.



This art design was used on the route cards of the Sells-Floto Circus from 1921 through 1924. Pfening collection.

shipped to Lancaster. In addition to the foregoing, Sells-Floto received one of the five elephants that had been on the Yankee Robinson Circus. This was a male, "Billy", whose name Sells-Floto promptly changed to "Young Snyder". He was a replacement for the famous big "Snyder" that had sired several elephants on Sells-Floto Circus until he had to be killed after a rampage in Salinas, Kansas, in September 1920.

The usual winter quarters activities took place in Denver. As had been true in recent years many of the staff and performers made their winter homes in Denver and its environs so that there was always gossip of their activities in and around the winter quarters during the off season. But the winter's big news was that the show was again to start the season in the Coliseum in Chicago, this year on April 9, for a sixteen day run through April 24 with an impressive roster of performers and a new Spec entitled "The Birth of a Nation". One of the star attractions, new to the United States, was Poodles Hanneford, famous comedy bareback rider from Ireland, who was to be the featured star. New advertising lithographs were procured to publicize his performing skills. Advance publicity also proclaimed that the show had forty elephants but this was a gross exaggeration, the actual number is believed to have been only fourteen for the Chicago engagement but with only ten performing. The elephants, animal cages and performing horses were housed in the Coliseum annex.

As the opening date neared the show requested that all aerial acts with rigging were to report at the Coliseum on April 4, all other performers and ticket sellers on April 5 and the big show band on April 6. All the working men including the cookhouse crew were to report in St. Louis, the under canvas opening stand, on April 22 and the side show people April 23. All hostlers, animal men and prop men had to report in Denver on or before April 1.

The show opened with a matinee Saturday, April 9 in a snow storm to about a 90% full house. Besides the Mssrs. Mugivan, Bowers and Ballard, H.H. Tammen, Otto Floto and Major Gordon "Pawnee Bill" Lillie were in attendance. Also attending was a large group from the Showmen's League of America who presented the show with a large floral horseshoe which was placed in the lobby.

Following a pre-show concert by Don Montgomery and his 32 piece band, the performance started with the aforementioned spec, "The Birth of the Rainbow". The performance in Chicago was presented in three rings and two stages as it was throughout the tented tour. The program which follows was that given on the road, the Chicago show being beefed up slightly with the addition of a few aerial and ground acrobatic acts not here listed.

2—First came clowns in grotesque antics with funny mules in the three rings

3—The three rings had three groups of elephants "in new and original feats" — three elephants in each end ring worked by Stella Rowland and Mlle. Weber with Blanche Wells handling four in the center ring. The bulls had been trained by Emory Stiles (who formerly had handled that chore for the Ringlings) and who was in charge of the menagerie as well as the elephants.

4—The top of the tent over the rings and stages was filled with six acts — Sweeney and Newton; Hendryx Duo; Marguerite Beeson; Don Ward; The

LaPearls; and Ethel Hamilton. Over the track on swinging ladders were the Nelson Girls; The Misses Sweeney, Hamilton and Lausten.

5—This number had a variety of contortion and hand to hand balancing by Sarato and Arenson; Kremka Brothers; Ardine and Schubert; Mozer Brothers; and Martin and Walters.

6—Here Leo Hamilton had a melange of ponies, dogs and monkeys; Capt. Tiebor presented his trained sea lions; Blanche Wells showed off her dogs; and James Williams exhibited ponies, dogs and monkeys.

7—This number presented three outstanding horse men in various feats of riding both with and without a saddle.

8—Next came the first mass appearance of the clowns (about 20) headed by Herman Joseph, Earl Shipley and Art Borella in mirthful and fearless fire fighting similar to the act that was so popular on the Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey show.

9—The three rings and two stages were filled with the tight wire acts of Marguerite and Hanley; Sakato; Luckey Sisters (who had been with Sells-Floto for many years); Arenson; and Fred Biggs with Mme. Delno.

10—Again the clowns came on, this time to raise the roof with their terrible, discordant and funny band.

11—This number very popular in the nineteen twenties and thirties, filling three rings, was the "Act Beautiful," introducing snow white statue horses in picturesque poses together with beautiful creations of living human statuary (also white from head to toe) featuring the celebrated horse, Pasha, and the Venus of the ring, Agatha Weber.

This act was followed on the hippodrome track by high school horses as presented at society horse shows.

12—Again the show presented aerial artists — the Great Schubert; Beatrice Sweeney doing 150 revolutions per minute while suspended by her teeth; Marguerite and Hanley; and R. Martin.

13—This was the big equestrian bareback act of the show, presenting in the center ring "Poodles" Hanneford and family in a wild and comic performance that was one of the greatest of all time. So popular was it that during the season Poodles was, as I can attest, repeatedly called back into the ring after the act was over by the applause, a circumstance

Sells-Floto cage in street parade, season of 1915. This cage was sent from the show's Denver quarters to Howe's Great London Circus in Lancaster, Mo. in the early spring of 1921. It was used to house the newly purchased young male hippo, Little Vic. Joe Bradbury collection.



Air calliope on Sells-Floto lot about 1919. The corner carvings came from an earlier air calliope on the show in 1915. The sunburst type carvings on the sides were originals (or duplication) of those on the flat bed tableau used in 1917 to carry a

very unusual in the 20th century American circus. Two other outstanding bareback troupes, the Hobsons and the Hodgins performed in the end rings.

14—Again the three rings and two stages were occupied, this time by ground acrobats — Alexander Machedon troupe of comedy parallel bar acrobats; the Four Eugenes (later standbys on Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey) in a knockabout comedy act; the Pasha Arabs in whirlwind rapid tumbling; the Five Hirashima Japs in wrestling, fencing and the manipulation of many missiles; and finally the Art Monett group in another knockabout comedy act.

15—Now came one of the great female impersonators of all time, Albert Beeson, known as Alberta Beeson. Dressed in female attire he did an extremely clever tightwire act good enough to get a center ring solo spot, the only one in the show. He also was later to be featured on Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey.

16—At this time the clowns came on in a general walkaround — their last appearance in the show.

17—As the show drew near its end two troupes performed the usual somersaulting, double twisting and reverse flights on the flying trapeze, the Six Flying Nelsons and Todd, Beckman and Todd.

18—Five iron jaw groups were now shown — Minnie Fisher; the Hamilton Girls; Three Luckey Sisters; Stella Rowland; and the Sweeney Girls.

19—The show closed, not with races as most of the larger shows did, but with thundering Indian riding and horse sports in the rings and on the track by the Hodgins and Hodgsons dressed to represent Apache Indian Warriors, Sioux Indians and Mohawk Indian Braves.

horse and lady rider in patriotic costume in the street parade. The air calliope wagon pictured here was shipped from the show's Denver quarters to Howe's Great London Circus at Lancaster, Mo. in the early spring of 1921. Joe Bradbury collection.

The most successful Chicago engagement ended Sunday evening, April 24. The stripping of the Coliseum started immediately and everything was loaded and on the train so that it was able to leave for St. Louis by 2:20 Monday morning. The trip to St. Louis, 293 miles, was not a very fast one as they did not arrive until 3:00 in the afternoon when they were greeted by a downpour of rain. However, this was no problem as all the tents and seats were up and waiting. All that had to be unloaded and placed were the performers props and trunks and the cages in the menagerie. All the work in the big top was put off until the next morning. The first parade was not given until Wednesday morning. Out of the twelve shows given there, five were under cold and rainy skies. Business, as in Chicago, was fair to good. The early spring weather in the mid-west, they were finding out, could be hard on outdoor show business.

After the evening show, Sunday May 1, in St. Louis, the show left in the rain for its Monday stand at Springfield, Illinois, to start its first week of one day stands. In addition to having rain there, they had a late arrival. However, except for the next day at Danville where it was clear but cold, the rest of the week in Terre Haute, Indianapolis, Anderson, and

Howe's Great London Circus cage on the lot, season of 1921. This cage was shipped from Sells-Floto's Denver quarters to the Howe's quarters in Lancaster, Mo. to house the young male hippo, Little Vic, who in time grew into the massive Victor. Joe Bradbury collection.



Richmond all gave the show clear and warm weather.

According to J.A. Havirland, in 1921 Sells-Floto Circus was using, in addition to one advance car, 7 stocks, 14 flats and 8 coaches for a total of 30 cars. According to *The Billboard* early in the year the show had purchased 7 new 70 foot electric lighted steel sleepers, one performers steel diner, and one workingman's steel diner. This adds up to 9 cars, not the 8 the show was known to have. Either one of the 7 sleepers did not make the tour or more likely the two diners were actually one, half being for the performers and half for the workmen. These cars it was said had been purchased from the Hotchkiss-Blue Company. However, there is some doubt as to the accuracy of this statement.

After the close of the Saturday night show in Richmond they left for Pittsburgh. They were enroute 27 hours, not arriving until 6 a.m., Monday. Then it was three hours before the cars were spotted and unloading could begin. This was followed by a five mile haul to the lot. The result was that the parade did not get downtown until 1:30 and the show was not able to start until 3:45. In spite of this a straw house greeted the show in the afternoon and again at night so that all the track numbers had to be cut out. Tuesday the show paraded again, this time into East Liberty. Both parade routes were eight miles long. Tuesday the show had two capacity houses. Local papers commented that this was the first time in several years that a circus had clear weather. John Robinson Circus playing in another area near Pittsburgh a few days earlier had had drizzle and a muddy lot. On Wednesday, after a 126 mile run and arrival at 10:00 a.m. in the rain in Oil City, the menagerie was not put up. At the following towns, Warren, Pennsylvania, and Mount Morris, New York, where they had another 10:00 a.m. arrival they had more rain. The week ended Saturday in Rochester with an early arrival after a 37 mile run, clear and warm weather and two straw houses.

The week of May 16 opened in Syracuse with cold and disagreeable weather but two capacity houses. Binghamton, Scranton and Easton followed. At Easton, in a very unusual procedure, they unloaded across the river in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, after which they had a long two mile pull all uphill to the lot. On Friday they played Newark, New Jersey, and here the writer witnessed a very unusual event. Sells-Floto Circus on all its visits to Newark always unloaded a block from my home so I saw the all white show, "The Circus Beautiful", as all its wagons proclaimed in a small blue shield on each side in the upper front corner, unload many times. But I never in those early years saw the performance or parade. My mother had been born and raised in Bridgeport and was convinced that no show except Barnum & Bailey (she did not even recognize that the Ringling Bros. part of the name existed) was worth anything. However, I did watch the show unload that morning before school and as soon as school was out I was on my bike riding across town, about a mile to the lot.

As I approached the lot along the avenue I could see through trees the beautiful white tents with all the flags flying atop the center poles in the light breeze. But when I arrived at the entrance to the midway all was still. There were some people on the sidewalk in front of the midway and a few gawkers on the midway, but there was no activity. Under the marquee sat what appeared to be some of the management. It was obvious that no show was being given. I soon learned that the show had not been granted a permit. That evening the newspaper explained that efforts by the Sells-Floto management



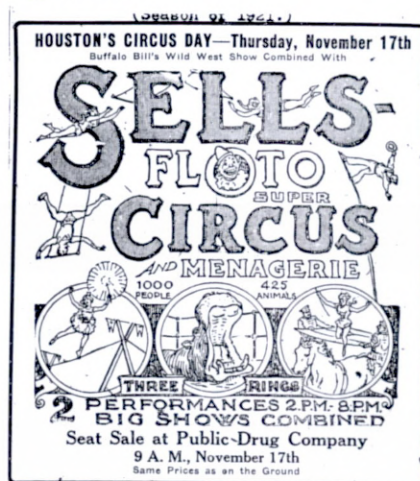
This Mack Bulldog truck shown on Sells-Floto in 1921 is one of the early models. An article covering all Mack trucks on circuses will appear in an upcoming issue. Oregon Historical Society collection.

to locate responsible city officials who could issue the necessary permits had been unsuccessful so no parade or performances were given. In late afternoon the show packed up and loaded out so I was able to witness that part of the activity which otherwise would have occurred too late in the night for me to see except for the cookhouse and draft stock top wagons.

Next day's paper said that it had learned that the city officials who could have issued the necessary permits if they had been located were (conveniently) guests at the Charles Ringling estate at Lake Swannanoa, about 30 miles from Newark, for a weekend of fishing. The Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey Circus was due in Newark the following week showing on the same lot. So we are left to draw our own conclusions. As far as I know this was a very unique, one of a kind, way of handling opposition by the Ringlings. In any event Newark did not see the wares of the Sells-Floto Circus in 1921.

The show left Newark for Staten Island where it was to finish the week in Clifton. It, of course, had an

This 1921 newspaper ad used in Houston, Texas, was one of the few that did not mention Poodles Hanneford. Pfening collection.



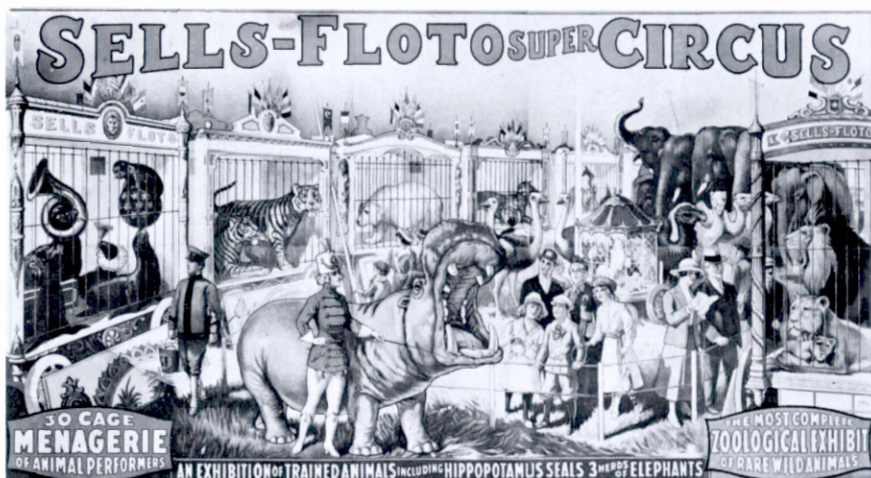
early arrival and was welcomed with splendid weather and two capacity houses. 45 members of a boys' band from a local institution were guests of the show at the matinee. Then after the evening show was completed, and most of the seats and props had been removed from the big top, as it was being taken down a sudden storm and wind squall finished the job. No one was injured but the show was considerably delayed in leaving for Schenectady, Monday's town, May 23.

Because of the late start from Staten Island and the fairly long jump of 196 miles the show did not arrive in Schenectady until 5 p.m. Sunday. After a rainy day in Schenectady the show made straight across Massachusetts for Boston in short jumps stopping at Pittsfield, Hartford, Springfield, and Fitchburg and Worcester with good weather in all of the last five except Hartford where they had a downpour of rain almost all day.

The show arrived in Boston, on Sunday, May 29, to get ready for a full week of six days in "the Hub". The city was well billed and the newspapers were full of the show. Much of the latter had been the responsibility of Frank Braden, Contracting Press Agent, but it was here that he left the show for the Ringling organization where he was to have a long tenure. He was replaced by William S. Naylor. The advance car managed by Paul Harrell and the opposition brigade managed by Carl Porter, each spending a week in the city, had billed the city heavily as they had to for the Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey Shows were due in on the same lot June 13. Getting the show into the cities in the east and mid-west ahead of the "Big One" was the job of General Agent Edward C. Warner which he was highly successful in accomplishing, much to the annoyance of the Ringlings and the pleasure of Mugivan, Bowers and Ballard.

The week in Boston was a highly successful one. The parade was postponed until Tuesday so it would not conflict with Monday's Memorial Day parade put on by the American Legion and Veterans of the Spanish American War. On Tuesday afternoon Governor Cox attended the performance and the next day Roland Butler, then working for the *Boston Herald-Traveler* and later to join Sparks Circus and then Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey Circus, spent the day on the show. Then on Thursday two leopards were born. After six days of near perfect weather and good crowds the show finished its stay in Boston Saturday night and packed up to leave on its further tour of New England towns.

When the show had been in Pittsfield the week before, Isaac Marcks made a rather complete inventory of the show which we give here. He said that the stock and flat cars were white with red



letters while the coaches were white with green trim. The wagons were also white with red letters, wheels and undergear. There were 50 wagons including 12 cages, a clown patrol wagon, a truck and an auto loaded on the 14 flats. The cages carried seals, tigers, lions, lioness, ostrich, bears, deer, parrots, and a hippo.

Interestingly he counted only seven elephants. Before the season started the show had 10 elephants, three just purchased, Mary, Kate and Young Snyder, previously referred to. And when the show opened there had been 10 in the performance, presumably these three plus Mama Mary, Floto, Big Trilby, Frieda, Kas, Mo and Billy Sunday, plus possibly four others. Mama Mary had been with the show since 1901. Trilby came to the show in 1904 while Floto and Frieda both arrived on the show in 1905. Kas and Mo were one year old punks imported in 1909 by Louis Ruhe of New York City and obtained by Sells-Floto at that time. Billy Sunday had been owned by Rhoda Royal and was with his act on Sells-Floto during the late nine-teens. Exactly when Sells-Floto acquired him is not now known. They were all Asiatic female elephants except Floto, Young Snyder and Billy Sunday who were Asiatic males. Trilby was an unusually large bull being 8 feet 5 inches tall and 9,000 pounds in 1935, and since she was twenty years old in 1921 she probably was not too much smaller at that time.

After leaving Boston the show moved to Lynn, Salem, Lowell, Haverhill, Lawrence and Manchester, all in Massachusetts except Manchester, where they had generally good weather and uniformly good business. The week starting June 13 began in Portland and was followed by Waterville, Bangor and Danforth. Unlike the previous week in Massachusetts these were all rainy days. Danforth, the last stand in Maine was a "matinee only" after which the show headed for Canada, crossing the border at McAdams. The week finished in more rain at Woodstock and Frederickton. The stay in Canada was to be for almost a month.

The first full week in Canada starting June 20 was spent in St. John, Sussex, Amherst, New Glasgow, Windsor and ended in Digby where only a matinee was given preparatory to a fairly long and difficult trip to Halifax. This trip of 151 miles was, however, made without delays in three sections. Halifax was a two day stand to be followed by Kentville, Truro, Moncton, and New Castle. After rain on Monday the weather the rest of the week was clear but cold. The third week in Canada starting July 3 was spent in Campbellton, Riviere du Loup, Quebec, Trois Riviere

The outstanding menagerie of the Sells-Floto Circus was featured in this 20 sheet poster printed by Strobridge in 1921. Dunn collection.

and Montreal for two days. In Campbellton a special 4th of July dinner was served in the dining top which was decorated with red, white and blue streamers. Riviere du Loup had only a matinee after arriving earlier than expected, 8 a.m., after a long run of 182 miles. Quebec had a very long and hilly parade route with the parade not getting back to the lot until 1:15 causing a half hour delay in opening the doors, but the show was only a few minutes late in starting. The final week in Canada started July 11 in Ottawa followed by a "matinee only" in Smith's Falls because of a long run the next day of 207 miles into Toronto. Although the show left Smith's Fall at 9 p.m. it did not arrive in Toronto until 9 a.m. the next morning. It was necessary to cancel the parade and the afternoon show did not start until 3:30. Then came London and Windsor to finish the Canadian tour with a return to the States on Saturday at Detroit.

From Detroit the show made 256 miles to Gary, Indiana, where they did not arrive until 1 p.m. Sunday. The next day, July 18, was a tough one. The weather was hazy, humid and very hot all day with a sand and wind storm hitting at 5 o'clock, a half hour after the concert in the big top ended. The elephants became nervous and two of them started a stampede heading down the street. However, Manager Zack Terrell and Edward Ballard went after them and quickly had them stopped and turned back to the lot before they had done any damage. Shortly afterwards the wind suddenly increased and all the tents except the side show were blown down. The blowdown was followed by a heavy rain and the evening performance had to be cancelled. The big top was the worst damaged and it was necessary to return it to Chicago for repairs. Fortunately the previous years top was still in storage there and it was immediately shipped to Elgin, Illinois, Tuesday's stand, where it arrived before the show arrived at 8 a.m.

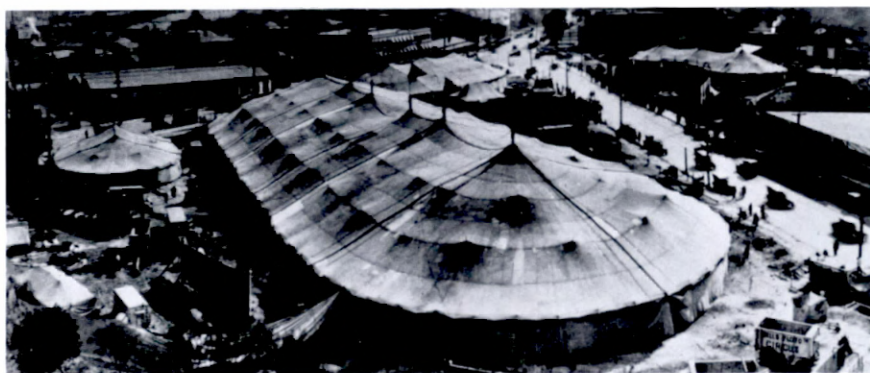
At Elgin, July 19, there was more trouble but fortunately no problem. During the afternoon show the "untamable lion", Nero, escaped from his cage in the side show causing some excitement. But he was lassoed and returned to his cage without hurting anyone. The week continued in Baraboo where while the show did not arrive until 10 a.m. the parade and two shows were given. Many of the showfolk visited

the old Ringling winterquarters (now the home of the Circus World Museum). The week ended in Eau Claire, St. Paul and Minneapolis. In Eau Claire the car in which the Hannefords traveled was broken into and clothing stolen. A couple of days later the police caught the thieves but not the clothes.

The big top that had been ripped and blown down in Gary was 140 foot round (the erected size — the canvas size was about 150 feet) with three 50 foot and two 30 foot middles. It is interesting that as big as this show was the big top was only about as wide and 50 feet longer than today's Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus big top. But inside it looked pretty big. With its length and the other tents on the lot there was a lot of canvas for the locals to look at. The menagerie top was a 90 foot round with five 30 foot middles. In it were the twelve cages, the ten elephants and a number of camels and zebras. The side show top was a 60 foot round with two 30 foot middles. It was fronted by a double width entrance banner, two double width and eight single width attraction banners. One of the double width banners advertised Nero, the fighting lion. There was also a number two side show. The padroom was a 60 foot round with one 30 foot middle. Other tents were a wardrobe top, ring stock top, three draft stock tops, dining top, cookhouse and four or five small tops plus, of course, the entrance marquee.

The sixteenth week was a memorable one. The show opened in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, and then moved to Oshkosh for July 16. There it "day and dated" the Al. G. Barnes Circus. Barnes was only two blocks away down the street. There was no evidence of any trouble between the shows' billing crews and all was friendship on show day. Mugivan, Ballard, Bowers, Terrell and Warner were there and entertained Mr. and Mrs. Al. G. Barnes and General Agent Pennock in the Sells-Floto dining top for dinner. A local paper described the event, "What proved to be the biggest circus day Oshkosh ever had has come and gone. There were no casualties in the battle. Nobody was hurt and both entertainments did a good business. In fact, it is doubtful if either one could have drawn much larger crowds if the circuses had come here on different dates, instead of both showing on the same day. To an impartial judge, it was evident that both companies did a fine business and made money. The Barnes Circus (admission 85 cents) was packed at both performances. The Sells-Floto Circus (admission 75 cents) did not have the capacity crowds at either afternoon or evening performances but it had a somewhat larger tent and greater seating capacity than Barnes Circus and therefore, while the attendance appeared to be smaller because of the greater tentage, as a matter of fact, the Sells-Floto attraction probably exhibited to fully as many as did the Barnes entertainment. In other words, the two shows broke about even, it being close to a 50-50 proposition in the matter of attendance. Each circus was high class in every feature and clean and wholesome. The two were distinctly different types of circuses, and some people preferred one to the other and decided their patronage accordingly. Barnes billed his circus here first and then came along the bills of the Sells-Floto Circus announcing the same date. Both circuses pitched their canvases within almost a stones throw of each other. Neither attraction appeared to be hurt by the conflict in dates and there was plenty of business for both.***"

Other reports to *The Billboard* tended to confirm the foregoing report of good business for both shows although differing slightly in details. While business and relations between the shows appeared good



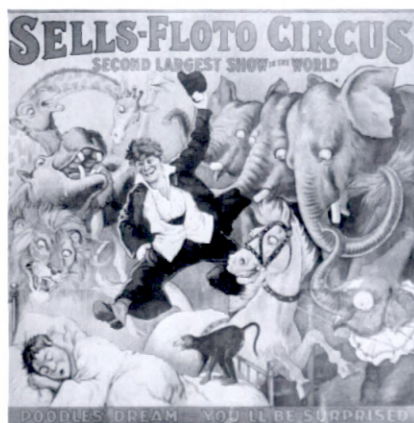
The six pole big top of the Floto show is pictured on a lot in 1921. Pfening collection.

there was one episode that belied this slightly. It seems that during the morning the Sells-Floto truck in coming around a corner on the main street startled a Barnes six horse team pulling a baggage wagon to the lot so that it veered, pulling the wagon over the curb and knocking down a side walk clock in front of a jewelry store. Barnes refused to pay damages, stating the accident was caused by Sells-Floto Circus, but they posted a \$100 bond to cover their later court appearance. It is apparent that this was all a purely legal skirmish having no real effect on the relationship between the shows. This meeting of the two shows certainly was a contrast to the days of the Sells-Floto show under the Bonfils-Tammen ownership when they carried on bitter battles with other shows, particularly the Ringling interests. The week was finished out in Sheboygan, Milwaukee, Kenosha, and Lake Geneva with no further incidents of note.

With the arrival in Kensington, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, on Sunday July 31, the show started a period when Sunday shows became a fairly regular occurrence. Also at Kensington there were a number of visitors from the Ringling show which was playing in Chicago. The rest of the week the show was in Kewanee, Davenport, Iowa, Iowa City, Des Moines, Trenton, Missouri, and St. Joseph. In Des Moines there was a street car strike and, with jitneys being the only way to get to the show grounds, attendance suffered somewhat. In Trenton the night show had to be hurried and the concert eliminated because of threatened high winds.

The eighteenth week started with another Sunday show, August 7, the first of a two day run in Kansas

This delightful animal bill featured Poodles Hanneford, the feature of the 1921 Floto show. It was a six sheet and was printed by Strobridge. Dunn collection.



City, Missouri. Next came Maryville with an 11:30 arrival, no parade and a 4:00 o'clock afternoon show. Then the next day in Omaha there was another late arrival, no parade and a 3:00 o'clock matinee. The next day in Lincoln they arrived in good time, but did not parade because of a prohibitive license fee. The two remaining stands in the week at Grand Island and North Platte were uneventful.

The week of August 14 started in Sterling, Colorado, a "matinee only" town, with rain in the morning but clearing in time for the show. Then came more rain for the early tear-down. The show left at 7:00 p.m. on a 140 mile run into Denver, a two day stand. Tammen and Bonfils and family and friends were constant visitors there. The rest of the week was spent in Colorado Springs, Greeley, Cheyenne and Laramie. The twentieth week started with another "matinee only" Sunday date at Rock Springs, Wyoming, with a 10 a.m. arrival after a 236 mile run, one of the fastest of the season. On Monday they were in Ogden, Utah, followed by Provo where in spite of the "great open spaces" of the west they could not find a lot large enough to accommodate the whole show. John Eberle, Supt. of Canvas only had room enough to put up a four pole big top and no room for the menagerie top. The rest of the week had them in Salt Lake City, Logan, Pocatello, Idaho, and Twin Falls.

Sunday, August 28, was spent mostly in travel, a 265 mile run into Boise where they did not arrive until 1:30 p.m. The week had six show days, Boise, Caldwell, then into Oregon at Baker City, Pendleton, Walla Walla, Washington and back into Idaho at Lewiston where after a 139 mile run they did not arrive until 11 a.m. and had to cancel the parade. Then Sunday morning on the long 194 mile run to Spokane a serious accident was averted by an alert railway station telegrapher. As the second section was passing through a small station twenty miles from Spokane, the telegrapher noticed that some of the tension rods under one of the wooden flats had given way. He wired ahead and the train was stopped at the next station. As a result the second section did not arrive until after 2 p.m. This episode reveals the fact that the show was still using the 60 foot old style wooden flats in spite of the pre-season report that they had purchased some 70 foot steel flat and stock cars. After Spokane on Monday came Wenatchee, Everett and Bellingham.

The run into Wenatchee was 174 miles and they arrived at 8 a.m. The next day coming into Everett they had only 132 miles but did not arrive until 11 a.m. and had to cancel the parade. The difference in the two runs time was that the latter was over

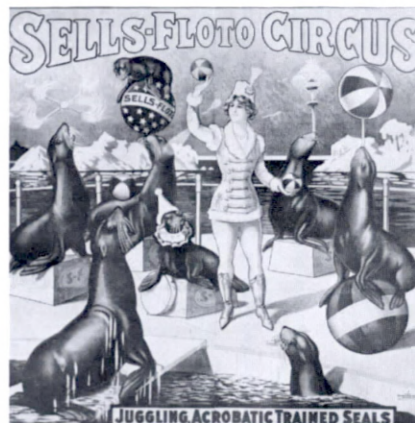
mountains and through snow sheds which held down the train speed. The last two days of this week saw a brief return to Canada for a two day stand at Vancouver, B.C. Although it was a short run in with an early arrival, because of a long haul to the lot, a small one where Fred Seymour's cookhouse had to be put on a lot three blocks away, and other problems, the parade was late in getting downtown.

The week starting Monday, September 12, saw the show in Seattle for two days. There a party of Eskimos getting ready for a trip to the North Pole were entertained at the matinee on Monday. Then came Tacoma, Centralia, Vancouver and Astoria. At Centralia a section of the big top side wall caught fire but was quickly extinguished by D. W. Embleton, Supt. of Lights and one of his assistants. In Vancouver the Dodge truck used to take the day's receipts to the cars was held up by three men two blocks from the lot and only one block from the cars. Besides the show Treasurer, F. A. McLain, and the driver there were nine others from the show including three of the Hanneford family. About \$30,000 in cash was stolen. Most of the money was recovered two days later as the robbers were digging it up where they had buried it. Two of the three were wounded in the ensuing gun battle with the police. All were arrested. The week ended in fog and rain at Astoria, Oregon.

Portland started the next week with another two day stand. Here "Mac" McNulty, the side show manager, left and was replaced by Arthur Davis who had been contracting agent. Then came Salem with an early 5 a.m. arrival with the lot only one block away. Here they entertained the Governor at the afternoon show and at dinner in the cookhouse. The week drew to a close in Eugene where the lot was only two blocks from the runs, Roseburg where it was only a three block haul and in Medford where with a 10 o'clock arrival they still gave the parade and two performances.

The week of September 25 started with another Sunday show day in Montague, California. Then came Klamath Falls, Oregon, where they had a 5 a.m. arrival after a 113 mile run and great numbers of Indians at both shows. Next came a slow run of about 140 miles over a very mountainous route into Redding, California. They did not get in until 2:30 in the afternoon, gave the parade at 6:30 in the evening, the only time during the season that such a thing was done, and one performance in the

This 6 sheet Strobridge bill is interesting as it shows a baby seal being balanced by its mother. The same scene is depicted in the menagerie bill. Dunn collection.





The Buffalo Tableau wagon was used in the 1921 Sells-Floto parade. This photo was taken in 1920. Clayton Hawkes photo.

evening. The rest of the week was uneventful at Chico, Sacramento, Vallejo and Santa Rosa.

Another Sunday date started the 26th week in Richmond followed by Oakland, Santa Cruz and San Jose before they arrived in San Francisco on Thursday for a four day visit. The lot only a mile from the runs was at Eighth and Market Streets. All eight performances in the city were at or near capacity and the show received much praise from all the newspapers. On their second day there they did what no other show had done in San Francisco. They took Poodles Hanneford, seven elephants and a number of other performers and clowns to the Children's Hospital and put on a show for the hundreds of kids confined there. The rest of that week was spent in Stockton, Modesto, Fresno, Hanford, Porterville and Bakersfield. Most of the runs were short, under 100 miles, arrivals early and lots near the runs.

On October 16 it took three engines to get the train 93 miles over the mountains into Lancaster by 11 a.m. for a late "matinee only". Then came Santa Barbara, Pasadena, San Pedro and Long Beach where they had the first haul of over half a mile in over a week. Here because of a city ordinance that did not permit a circus to unload before 7 a.m. (and they were in early for the run from San Pedro was only eight miles, the shortest run of the season) they had to unload outside the city limits, 3½ miles from the lot. The week ended in Santa Ana and San Diego.

With only five weeks left they started the week Monday, October 24, in Los Angeles for three days. They had capacity business for the entire run there with turnaways Monday and Tuesday nights. On Tuesday night Al. G. Barnes was a guest of the show for the second time that season. Many movie stars attended the six performances. Then followed Pomona, Riverside and El Centro where after a 127 mile run, a 10:30 a.m. arrival, the parade and two performances were given to good business.

Now started the home run through Arizona and New Mexico into Texas. The week of October 30 started with a "matinee only" in Yuma, Arizona, to be followed by a 200 mile run to Phoenix. They arrived there at 6 in the morning and had ideal weather and good business. Next after a 122 mile run they arrived early in Tucson, gave a parade and two performances to satisfactory business. The opposition brigade of the Al. G. Barnes Circus were visitors, the last Sells-Floto would see of the Al. G. Barnes Circus for the rest of the season. The rest of the week had long runs as would most of the rest of the season

which except for Douglas, Arizona, and Columbus, New Mexico, all would be in Texas starting in El Paso and Marje. The runs into the four last towns of this week were 123, 143, 73 and 197 miles respectively.

The last three weeks as stated were all in Texas. They started in November 7 at Del Rio which was followed by Eagle Pass, Uvalde, San Antonio, Laredo and Corpus Christi. There was a 153 mile run into Laredo and the show did not arrive until noon but still gave a parade and two shows. In all the Texas towns before Laredo the show arrived early and gave parades and two performances. The next week had runs of 157 miles into Brownsville, 119 into Kingsville, 165 into Bay City, 88 into Houston, 105 into Orange and for a change only 44 into Port Arthur. At Orange November 18 another elephant episode occurred. Sells-Floto over the years seemed to have more elephant trouble than all other shows combined. So far as I can determine there has never been an adequate explanation for this. In any event in Orange a man fed the elephant Floto a chew of tobacco which he very much disliked and which started him on a rampage. After doing considerable damage in the menagerie tent and outside and sending one man to the hospital, he disappeared into the woods outside of town. About a hundred men followed him, lost him and finally found and cornered him the next morning well out in the country. After charging his pursuers several times and receiving about a hundred bullets he finally was killed. So again for the second season in a row Sells-Floto Circus found it necessary to kill one of their elephants in Texas.

The season ended with Texas stops in Galveston,



This large three den cage was used in the 1921 parade, also a 1920 photo. Clayton Hawkes photo.

Brenham, Bryan, Corsicana, Dallas and Fort Worth. In Dallas they arrived early and set up on the fairgrounds. Locals stated that it was the largest circus to visit Dallas in years. And so a successful season came to an end.

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THE CIRCUS YEAR IN REVIEW

1979 SEASON

The 1979 circus season caused few smiles among either owners or fans. Only a very few shows admitted they had a good year. Most showmen said the take was fair. Some said bluntly it was a poor year and the future of a number of circuses was uncertain.

The spring and early summer gasoline shortage created problems for several shows caught in the more critical areas but this didn't cause as much grief overall as the subsequent almost doubling of fuel costs before the end of the season. The continued spiralling inflation of all costs added to showmen's woes. Rising costs plus the ever increasing headaches of more and more regulation by all levels of government was a fact of life for circuses on the road in 1979. Circus owners, almost to a man, were heard to remark, "It gets harder every year to make one of these outfits go."

Weatherwise, the winter and early spring months were rough. Extremely cold winters, back to back, caused problems, especially for individual acts travelling to make show dates in the east and midwest. In the spring the floods came in Mississippi and other areas. During the summer and fall the weather was fairly good in most sections of the country and outdoor circuses suffered no unusual problems.

The total number of circuses on the road was comparable to a year ago, however the number of under canvas shows was down. Tents seemed to be entering a down cycle which has periodically occurred since 1931. Historians recall low peaks occurring in 1932, 1939, 1951, 1957, and 1968.

The biggest news at the beginning of the season was that a third railroad circus, the long awaited Ringling-Barnum "third unit" came into being in the form of the 15 car Monte Carlo show. Although receiving some of the highest plaudits ever given a new show it just didn't click on the road, the tour was aborted and it was sent to spend the rest of the season as a permanent attraction at the Ringling owned Circus World theme park in Florida.

Another major circus news item was the situation of the Acme Circus Corporation which operated Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros., King Bros., and Sells & Gray circuses in 1978. Serious illness of Frank McCloskey, long time leader of the Acme shows, forced his complete retirement from management and brought on his partner, Jerry Collins, to take charge of the helm.

A change of ownership and title of one of the larger canvas shows took place when Johnny Frazier purchased Dorey Miller's interest in the 1978 Carson & Barnes No. 2 show and changed the title to Circus Genoa. Otherwise, there were few changes in either title, ownership, or modus operandi of the existing circuses from the previous season.

During the season there seemed to be an uncanny silence by shows over their routes. For weeks only the two Ringling-Barnum units and Beatty-Cole would have their routes published regularly in the trade publications. Sometimes Vargas, Hoxie, and Carson & Barnes routes would appear but almost never those of the smaller shows. One long time publisher of a weekly sheet of circus routes said it was the hardest season he could ever recall in

obtaining routes from the various shows. Why the silence on routes was not fully determined. Possibly, the rash of bureaucratic regulators waiting to descend on an unsuspecting circus with rules and regulations caused many a show not to publicize its whereabouts. Naturally a few, as has been the case since time immemorial, didn't want creditors to know where they were. One circus owner frankly admitted he not only didn't want a particular rival show to know where he was going, he didn't even want him to know where he had been, so he couldn't later come in and burn the territory for the future. But whatever was the reason for keeping the lid on the route the practice played havoc with many a fan's circus going plans. One fan in Ohio publically complained that he had found out to his disappointment that three circuses had been in his area, all of which he would have attended, had he known in advance where they would be playing. This was the sad story fans throughout the land could understand.

The nation's under canvas circuses numbered around 20. This included those which played exclusively in tents and those who did so only part time. As usual several shows claimed to be the biggest of the tenters. Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros., Circus Vargas, and Carson & Barnes, all made this claim, and depending on the standard of measurement, all were legitimate. No challenge. Carson & Barnes had the most elephants, Vargas had the largest big top, with Beatty-Cole claiming its bigness in a combination of factors. Hoxie Bros. wasn't far behind the others. Rest of the pack ranged from medium size down to quite small. The overall number of tent circuses was smaller than it had been in several seasons. Missing were two well known titles, King Bros., and Sells & Gray, both of which had toured for over 15 continuous seasons. Nothing was heard from Hix Bros., formerly Circus Kirk, nor Dixiana. DeWayne Bros., a long timer on the west coast, did not tour as a circus, but its tent and equipment were used in a movie.

The Acme Circus Corporation which had on the

The midway and side show front of the Fisher Bros. Circus is shown in West Point, Ky., in July 1979. Bill Rhodes photo.

road three tenters in 1978, Beatty-Cole, King Bros., and Sells & Gray was in difficulty during the very early weeks of 1979 due to the illness of Frank McCloskey. When it became obvious he could not hold the reigns of management any longer, Jerry Collins, who had owned fifty percent of Acme since its beginning in 1956, came to the fore and on March 2 became acting president. He gave the decision to get Beatty-Cole ready for the road and to shelve King Bros. and Sells & Gray. Several key personnel who had served on the smaller shows were absorbed by Beatty-Cole and a number of vehicles which had transported King and Sells & Gray were used to replace older trucks on the single show going out from the DeLand, Fla. quarters in 1979. The four elephants, two on each of the smaller shows, were used to enlarge the Beatty-Cole herd to a total of 13. Both King Bros. and Sells & Gray were then offered for sale but neither had been disposed of before the end of the year.

Beatty-Cole was essentially the same size as the previous year although as indicated the elephant herd was enlarged. Approximately the same number of vehicles was used for transportation, about 25 in all. Last years big top, a blue and white striped 150 with three 50's by Leaf, continued in use. The show had the same format of the previous season, that of playing shopping centers exclusively with no sponsored dates nor phone solicitation. Tim Stinson was in charge of booking the show into various shopping centers using a saturation advertising and publicity campaign. Colorful posters and date sheets were used as well as window and tack cards. John Pugh served as road manager. A new blue and white striped sideshow top was purchased to match the color scheme of the big top. In addition to several conventional sideshow acts the top housed a petting zoo consisting of miniature horse, baby kangaroo, llamas, deer, as well as the 13 elephants. Gene Nichols headed the 8 piece big show band.

Beatty-Cole opened in Gainesville, Fla., March 12-13 with four straw houses turning out. Most stands were three dayers. The early route carried the show into Georgia and South Carolina, after which it backtracked into Florida and headed west along the Gulf coast through Alabama and Mississippi. Then it headed northward into Arkansas and Tennessee.





Great American Circus on the lot at Carrollton, Ga., April 19, 1979. Photo by Joe Bradbury.

Considerable bad weather was encountered in the early weeks. In May the show was in the midwest playing dates in Missouri, Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio, then it moved eastward into Pennsylvania. The show was the host circus for the annual CFA convention in Gettysburg, Pa., June 11. Jerry Collins was quoted in late May, "This year has been a good one so far. Sure, we had to endure the floods in Mississippi but that is all behind us."

In late June the show played New Jersey, then moved up into New England for dates in Connecticut, Maine, and Rhode Island. August saw it back in Pennsylvania and then west into Ohio and Michigan. As fall began the show moved in a southeasterly direction through West Virginia, Tennessee, the Carolinas, Georgia, and back into Florida. Final date of the season was in Tampa, Nov. 12-14.

After a lengthy illness, Frank McCloskey died on November 8. A short time earlier Collins had purchased his interest and thus became sole owner of Beatty-Cole and the Acme properties. Collins later organized a new corporation, Universal Circus Holding Co., which would be the parent unit from now on. At the season's end Collins was quoted in the trade publications.

"We are striving to return the Beatty-Cole circus to its former glory and plans for 1980 are well underway."

Collins also promised in the future that the operations would be diversified but no immediate changes were anticipated. For several months it had been speculated by several on the show as well as outsiders that some changes in the format might be coming. Whether this meant a return to some sponsored dates would be forthcoming, only time will tell.

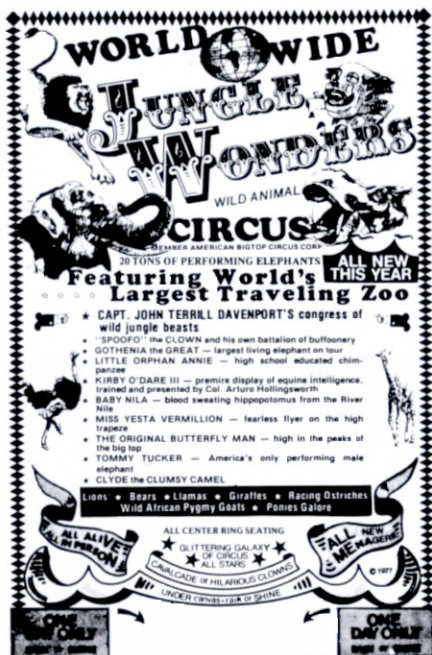
The absence of King Bros. and Sells & Gray was strongly felt in 1979 by both circus people and fans alike. A King titled show had operated continuously since 1959 and Sells & Gray since 1962. Sells & Gray had always been an Acme property and King since 1961. Keen observers of the circus scene said that many prime stands in Georgia, the Carolinas, as well as territory in Tennessee and Kentucky went untapped in 1979 due to the absence of these shows. Hopefully, both would return at some future date.

Circus Vargas, which traditionally has spent very little time in winterquarters, opened its season very early in the year, at San Diego, Calif., Jan. 5-8. Clifford E. Vargas, the show's owner, had virtually an

all new performance and termed his 1979 edition, "The best show I've ever had." A new big top, 160 ft. round with three 50's, made of blue canvas trimmed in orange, was used when the show was set up on hardtop as it usually was, but when on the ground an older orange colored top was put up. A menagerie-sideshow top which was eliminated in mid season 1978 was still missing from the Vargas midway. In its stead the elephant herd was staked out on one side of the midway and could be plainly seen by all entering the area. An elephant ride was operated there as well as inside the big top during intermission. Also on the midway were a pony sweep, Moon Walk, and large concession semi. The splendid semi providing restroom facilities was parked a convenient distance away.

The number of elephants in the Vargas elephant herd varied during the season from 10 to 13. Included were some bulls privately owned by Rex Williams, supt. of elephants. One of Williams' male elephants, "Reed", died during surgery in the early

This art work was used by the Jungle Wonders Circus in newspaper ads and a promotional folder. Hank Fraser collection.



Circus Genoa semi No. 30, elephants, on lot at Towanda, Pa., May 30, 1979. Photo by Robert Treat.

part of the season. The show travelled on 17 vehicles, most of them semis. A new custom built trailer housed the office and ticket department. A feature of the vehicle was four ticket windows. Although no caged animals were carried other than the tigers of Harry Thomas Jr.'s act there was a goodly number of lead stock. Approximately 25 head of ring horses were carried, enough to provide three rings of liberty acts simultaneously plus 6 ponies. A count of other lead stock at the show's stand in Atlanta, Ga., Oct. 6-11, revealed 1 zebra, 1 dromedary, 2 llamas, 1 donkey, 1 yak, and 13 elephants.

Vargas, which developed the format for playing shopping centers continued exclusively with this operation throughout the season with dates usually running from 3 to 6 days in duration. In Atlanta the show used virtually no posters or dates, other than in the sponsor mall, but widespread use was made of a window card. Only one design of the card was used but it could be spotted in store windows located many miles in all directions from the mall.

Vargas began the season with one of the longest tours of California on record, from opening day until late June when the show finally moved northward into Oregon. The much shorter moves than usual were of great benefit during the worst of the gas shortage weeks in that state in April and May. A repeat of the northwest area of Oregon and Washington which had been so profitable a year ago was made. The show spent two weeks in the Seattle area and business was very big despite the fact that three other shows were booked into the city, Hubert Castle, American Continental, and Ringling Red. Observers in the area said the show had some outstanding promotions. In August the show finally left the west coast area and moved south and eastward through Idaho, Utah, Colorado, and on to New Mexico. It was in Texas at El Paso, Sept. 7-11, which was followed by more Lone Star state dates, taking the show ever toward the east. Actually the fall route was uncertain until El Paso when Vargas decided he would move the show on into the deep south. He told the trade publications that business had been good in the northwest and mountain states after somewhat spotty business caused by the gas crunch earlier in California. Following an Oct. 1-4 date in Baton Rouge, La. the show resumed its routing ways of former seasons and moved some 500 miles to Atlanta, Ga. Then came a backtrack through Alabama, on to Louisiana, and Texas. When



Big John Strong Circus on lot at Abilene, Kan., 1979 season. Photo by Jim McRoberts.

December rolled around the show was still in Texas and a finale for the season was scheduled in Odessa.

The 1979 Vargas program which included an opening walkaround spec was well balanced with caged animal acts, aerial, and ground numbers. Traditional circus music buffs were disappointed that the large band led by Jim Gibson in 1978 and played the old time stuff was replaced by a smaller six piece outfit headed by Dave Epperly, organist, which featured a more contemporary musical repertoire.

Dory R. Miller, owner of Carson & Barnes which carries the greatest number of elephants of any circus in the country, started off in 1979 by purchasing another pachyderm, this time one from Ozzie Schlentz, who formerly had the Royal Wild West Circus on the road.

Carson & Barnes used the same big top which had been delivered new in mid-season 1978. It was a 120 ft. round with five 40's, push pole type, made of orange and blue striped canvas. The show also had a 40x80 dining room top in the same colors. The 1976 big top was carried for use in very bad weather. Carson & Barnes moved on about 27 vehicles painted in a color scheme of large red and white vertical stripes for the semis with red tractors and the show's logo on the cab doors. New vehicles included one for the cookhouse and a canvas spool. The number of elephants varied, from 23-28. In September while in Ohio a count of the animal population on the show was made. It showed 28 elephants, 3 camels, 2 zebras, 1 ostrich, 4 llamas, 13 goats, 2 deer, 2 Brahama cattle, 2 donkeys, 1 hippo, 1 brown bear, 5 lions, 2 tigers, 1 leopard, 1 tiglon, and 1 buffalo. The menagerie was corralled between the marquee and big top. Caged animals were housed in shifting type dens. On the midway were a pony sweep, reptile show trailer, and giant turtle exhibit.

Title of the spec was "The Glory of old Mexico" and performance was presented in five rings. Perry Johnson was again band leader and played mainly traditional circus music.

Carson & Barnes opened in its long time quarters town of Hugo, Okla., March 16, then moved shortly thereafter into Texas where it encountered plenty of rain and mud throughout the rest of March and early April. Later in April the show went north into Oklahoma and on to Kansas, Nebraska, as far west as Colorado, then reversed and headed eastward. It played again through Nebraska, then Missouri and into Iowa and Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. By October it was moving south through Kentucky, Missouri, Arkansas, and into the deep south in Mississippi and Louisiana. A swing into Texas completed the season with final date coming at Mt. Pleasant on November

17. The show was unique in that it was the only really large tent making daily stands. Sponsored dates with phones was again the rule in 1979. Some posters and date sheets were used.

L. B. "Hoxie" Tucker again had two under canvas circuses on the road. The larger show, Hoxie Bros. advertised that it had the "World's Largest Round Top". The two center pole big top was a 140 ft. round with one 50 ft. middle which had been used in 1978. The sideshow-menagerie tent was 40 x 80 top which formerly was used on Hoxie's Great American circus. Inside the sideshow was featured the menagerie animals, a snake exhibit, sword swallower, magician, and Punch and Judy. Also on the midway was a Giant Ape Show, Moon Walk, and elephant ride. The big top had 14 high plank seating surrounding the one ring. Band consisted of organ, trumpet, and drums. Seven elephants, two large ones and 5 punks, including one African, were carried. The show moved on 9 semis, 5 straight bed trucks, and 4 trailers. Color scheme of vehicles was purple and white. All of the motorized equipment had been painted by Henry Thompson. While in Miami quarters shortly before the season began the show's canvas spool truck was destroyed by fire. Fortunately the canvas itself was saved.

Joe McMahon, veteran circus agent, handled the advance duties for the show. Although having experimented with a shopping center format for some dates in the past few years the show made the 1979 tour strictly with a sponsor type deal and widespread use of phones and picked up many stands in territory formerly traversed by Beatty-Cole, King Bros., and Sells & Gray. The season opened at Hialeah, Fla., April 17, and after a couple of weeks in the Sunshine state moved northward through Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia. By late May it was in Ohio. In June and July it was in its usual territory in New Jersey which was followed by a jump through New England and then into New York. It was Hoxie's first visit to New York state. In early August the show returned to the midwest and played in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois. It remained in this area through most of September. Joe McMahon was quoted in early September, "Business wasn't too good earlier in the season due to bad weather, a lot of rain."

Rapid moves then took Hoxie quickly out of the midwest and by late September it was as far south as Georgia and Florida. October saw a move along the Gulf Coast through the Florida panhandle, Mississippi, and on to a three day stand in New Orleans. The show then moved back toward its home state and the season came to an end on November 18 at Edgewater, Fla. A policy change made during the season was to move the 6 p.m. matinee back to 4 as the performance was so long it was difficult to re-set on the 6 and 8 format. Overall business was termed as fair for the season.

Hoxie Tucker's No. 2 show was titled Great



Circus Vargas on lot, Southlake Mall, Atlanta, Ga., Oct. 6, 1979. New office-ticket trailer in foreground with blue colored big top in rear. Photo by Joe Bradbury.

American Circus, eliminating all mention of the formerly prefixed "Hoxie's". The show was managed by Jim Silverlake and travelled on approximately 12 vehicles, including 6 semis. The show carried 3 elephants, a camel, and several ponies. Privately owned stock included a llama, more ponies, monkey, and dogs. On the midway were two walkthru pit shows, large ape, and snake. Vehicles were attractively painted and lettered in red, white, and blue. The season began with the 1978 big top in use but it was replaced on May 16 in Waynesboro, Pa. with a new 80 ft. round with one 40 and two 30's, from Leaf made of white canvas with red and blue trim. It was equipped with blue and white striped sidewalls.

The 1979 Great American tour began April 3 in Groveland, Fla. and then the show moved north through the state and into Georgia. Dave Miller on the organ furnished the music. The route took the show up the eastern seaboard rapidly and by May it was in Pennsylvania. Allen C. Hill made a deal to acquire the show for 75 one day stands he had booked in Pennsylvania. Results of this tour of the Hill dates were highly successful. Although considerable rain was experienced while under the auspices of Allen C. Hill Productions business was still termed as very strong. On May 23 at Connelville, Pa. the semi used for the snake show and a sleeper was destroyed in a wreck. No one was injured and the snakes were saved. The following day, Johnny Marshall, the purchasing agent, wrecked his camper. Upon conclusion of the Hill dates the show returned south through Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia. Final stand came October 13 at Swainsboro, Ga. to complete the 28th week season. Manager Jim Silverlake was quoted in the trade papers as saying the season was very successful. The spring dates moving north were spotty but good business highlighted the 75 days in Pennsylvania in the summer. During the final weeks of the season business was excellent in Kentucky but spotty in Tennessee and Georgia. The weak days were attributed to failure of the sponsors to adequately promote the show. Forsyth, Ga., was one of the big days in the late season in which the sponsor sold 2,400 advance tickets. Silverlake noted that inflation was taking its toll of profits, however. This was the cry of most of the shows on the road in 1979.

A new circus title in 1979 was that of Circus Genoa which was applied to the show which toured the year before as Carson & Barnes No. 2. Following the 1978 season the show had gone into quarters at an abandoned sawmill in Stapleton, Ala., near Mobile. During the winter Johnny Frazier, who had managed

the show, purchased most of the equipment from Dory Miller and leased from him a number of elephants. It was first reported the new title would be Circus Vegas but was changed to Genoa. The show was somewhat smaller than the year before. It moved on 18 trucks and trailers which were beautifully painted, decorated, and titled. The Genoa fleet was one of the most attractive on the road. At the start of the season the big top was reported to be a 120 ft. round with three 40's but later in the season visitors said the top was smaller. No sideshow was carried. On the midway was a snake show, pony ride, elephant ride, and two semis which had open cages containing tigers, lions, baboon, bears, and leopards. Seven large elephants were carried, transported on two semis. The season opened March 19 at Robertsdale, Fla. and was followed by other dates in the Florida panhandle. The show then moved quickly across Georgia, thru the Carolinas, Virginia, West Virginia, and was in Pennsylvania in May. In June the show was heading westward and was in Jackson, Mich., June 23-24.

While playing New Ulm, Minn. the show suffered a blowdown. For several weeks the show seemed to drop from sight, in fact there was a national wire

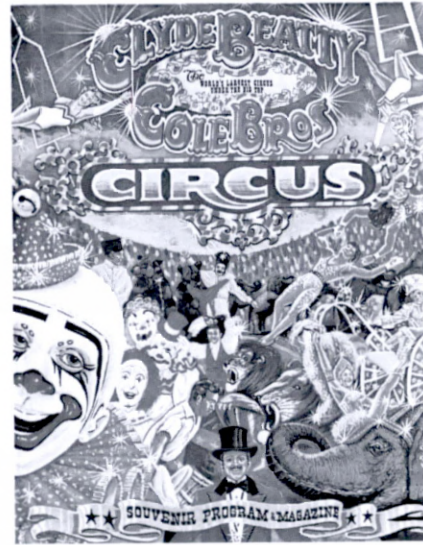
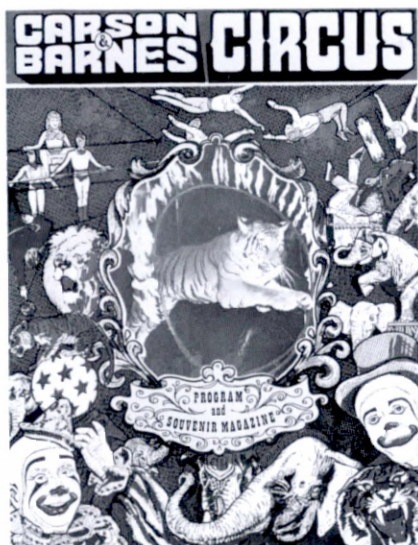
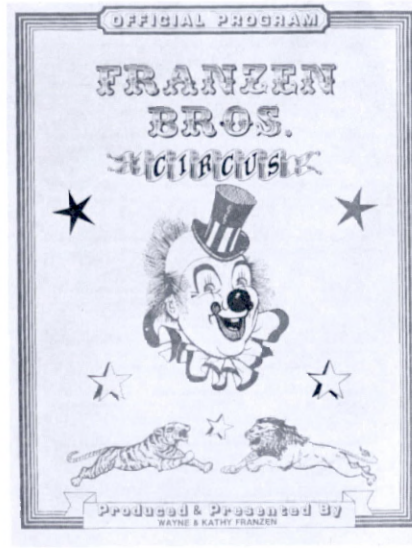
report on AP about the "missing circus". The report had it that Circus Genoa was scheduled in Flambeau, S.D. for a September showing but never arrived. Likewise it didn't make two scheduled stands in Iowa that were to follow. The tone of the article was that Circus Genoa had "disappeared". Later it was learned the show laid over for a few days near Vermillion, S.D. before resuming its route. Numerous problems were reported in the circus publications. There were difficulties with advance agents, the rising cost of supplies, as well as the general every day operations. The route when resumed took the show southward and it played Cozad, Neb., Sunday, Sept. 23, where a reviewer caught it and reported the motor equipment was handsomely painted, the performance good, and one of the top attractions was the splendid band led by Charlie Stephenson which played a program of traditional circus music. From Cozad the show took off a day to travel the 322 miles to Beaver, Okla. and then continued at a rapid

pace to Perrytown, Texas. Little or no reports came from the show during the remainder of the season.

Big John Strong's Circus, while in quarters at Yucaipa, Calif. prior to start of the season, purchased a truck from Dory Miller and also a new 40 KW light plant. The show, approximately the same size it has been for years, opened in California in March. After a couple of weeks in the state it was at El Centro, April 10, and the following day went into Arizona to play Gila Bend. Upon conclusion of several Arizona stands the show returned to California. While playing Blythe, Calif., April 16, a disturbed youth set fire to the big top. The blaze, started with gasoline, quickly became a wall of fire and only quick work by circus personnel prevented a disaster. A section of sidewall was destroyed and a portion of the big top and some seats were damaged.

At many of the early dates in California the show was just ahead or behind Circus Vargas which was making an extensive tour of the state. Big John was quoted in Circus Report, May 21, "Business so far this year has been about 25 percent ahead of what it was last year but our expenses are 40 percent higher." The shortage and rising price of gasoline in California in the spring hurt considerably. Visitors to

1979 Programs





A typical Monte Carlo wagon, all were built from sea/land containers, with wheels added. Taken in Providence, R.I. at the opening stand. Pfening photo.

the show reported there was one elephant, Neena, observed the new light plant, and noted all equipment had been newly painted. There were several new tractors.

On the midway was a miniature horse exhibit instead of a convention sideshow that was carried in 1978. Big John later left California again and moved east playing stands in Texas, Oklahoma, and on to Kentucky and Ohio. In early July while at Xenia, Ohio the show suffered a partial blowdown of the big top in the afternoon but the tent was later repaired and the evening performance went on as scheduled. Other circuses in the same general area in Ohio at the time of the blowdown were Circus Girard and Kelly Bros. Later in July the show headed west again playing thru Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas. The show was in Colby, Kan., July 13, and was visited by a reviewer. Business was good that day and an unusual feature noted in the performance was a herd of six Brahmas doing a fine liberty horse type act. Another old time crowd pleaser was a January mule act. Strong announced his show was for sale at the conclusion of the season. He cited health reasons and said he had to forgo the rigors of an outdoor type of show. In an interview for the trade publications Big John said his grosses were up but the cost of doing business was also moving up and advised that in his opinion the future of the tented circus is uncertain. John said the first weeks in California had been very good but since then business had at times been good, other times bad. In August the show played dates in Wyoming and Utah, moving ever west, toward the home state. Several weeks were spent in California prior to the closing stand, October 21, in Yucaipa. At the finale Big John said his health had improved and he had decided not to sell the show.

Jungle Wonders Circus, owned by John "Gopher"

Monte Carlo Circus flats and bi-level car at Niagara Falls, N.Y., Mar. 2-4, 1979. Photo by L.A. Sadler.



Monte Carlo Circus over land truck used to carry large back drop and back door. Taken at opening stand Providence, R.I., Feb. 20, 1979. Pfening Photo.

overflow crowd at night. It was the first circus there in 26 years. Reports said the show would close during the third week in September in Missouri.

Kelly Bros., owned by Gordon Walsh, opened March 29 in Oklahoma City and shortly thereafter went on a tour of Texas. By May the show was back in Oklahoma headed toward Kansas. Two straw houses were reported at Junction City, Kan., May 12, and in Manhattan, two days later, there were two more full ones. Moving eastward the show was reported at South Bend, Ind., June 14, and later made a tour of Ohio. Very few reports from the show were published and its route is not complete. In late September the show was in Arkansas. The show was approximately the same size it had been for the last few years and used a blue and yellow striped big top. It moved on about a half dozen trucks.

Franzen Bros., owned by Wayne and Kathy Franzen, wintered in Webster, Fla. and opened its sixth season at Lacombe, Fla. on April 19. The show travelled on 3 semis and 2 straightbed trucks. New in 1979 was a combination office-concession trailer, a 20 ft. Wells Cargo custom built vehicle. The show had a larger big top, an 80 ft. round with one 30. Seating capacity was 1,000 and performance given in a single 36 ft. ring. The 1978 big top had been a 60 with one 30. The show had 17 acts in the performance, including a caged animal presentation using 3 lions and 2 tigers.

Davenport wintered in Crosby, Texas, near Houston. Prior to the season's opener he purchased a blue colored tent from Circus Vargas which had been used as the menagerie sideshow on that show until it was discontinued in mid-season 1978. The tent had two center poles and was put into use as the Jungle Wonders big top during the coming season with the performance presented in a one ring format.

During the winter a new generator semi was

Martin & Downs concession and ticket semi on lot at Stirling, Ont., Canada, May 7, 1979. Photo by Paul Horsman.



purchased. It was reported that while in quarters the elephant, Susie, accidentally killed a baby African elephant, and two additional elephants were bought from a zoo in Oregon. Visitors reported a total of 4 elephants on the show during the early part of the season, later there were only 3.

A sideshow was carried and a total of 33 animals were on the show. These included 1 elephant, 12 horses, 1 camel, 1 llama, Sicilian donkey, ponies and dogs. The elephant was named Okhu. Music was provided by an organ and trumpet. Franzen Bros., after opening, played northward through Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. The show played the Genesee County Fair in Mt. Morris, Mich., Aug. 14-19. At Sardinia, Ohio, Sept. 22, a two day rain left six inches of water on the lot. The matinee was cancelled but the night performance went on as scheduled. Ordinarily the show used sponsors for its dates but a number of cold stands were played. The show was booked through the end of October as it moved south again through territory played earlier in the spring.



Roberts Bros., owned by Robert C. Earl, wintered in Florida and opened April 14 at Zephyrhills. The big top was the same one used the previous season. A new top was on order for June 1 delivery. Music was furnished by organ and trumpet and performance presented in three rings. One elephant, Lisa, leased from Carson & Barnes was carried. The show moved on 8 trucks. On the midway was a moon bounce, novelties, and concession stands. After opening, Roberts Bros. moved up the Atlantic seaboard and on June 7 while playing Schooley's Mountain, N.J. tragedy struck. During the evening performance a five year old boy was killed by a leopard during an "uncaged act". The animal was privately owned by the performer. No criminal charges were made against either the circus nor the owner of the leopard when it was found that all federal and state permits were in order and no safety regulations violated. State officials made a thorough investigation of the incident and those living in the area predicted stiffer regulations were sure to come. A new requirement was put into effect immediately making it necessary to put a physical barrier between an act such as this and the public and it was specified the barrier must be more than just a rope. The leopard act was paid off by the show at once and it left New Jersey without delay. Roberts Bros. continued to play out its route through the state but at every stand it found many zealous inspectors hanging around. Later the show went into New England for dates in Massachusetts. Next came a turnaround and the show headed back down the eastern seaboard to again winter in Florida. It had dates in Georgia booked for mid November.

The Hanneford Family Circus, owned by George Hanneford Jr., played the winter and spring season at the Circus Hall of Fame in Sarasota under a two center pole, bale ring type, red and white striped big top. Performance was given in one ring and featured the Hanneford riding act, a caged tiger act, and trained elephant. Seven high blue seating was used



and music was furnished by an organist. Upon conclusion of the Hall of Fame engagement the show played a number of dates at fairs in the midwest, including the Greenville, Ohio fair, August 17-24.

Stebbing's Royal European Circus, owned by William Stebbing, wintered in Florida and in the early spring provided the background for a Jerry Lewis movie. The equipment was also used for several TV commercials. The show left Florida in mid May and while headed north was caught in the independent

Carson & Barnes big top on lot at Brownsville, Neb., 1979 season. Photo by Jim McRoberts.

& Barnes, was carried. The midway contained a sideshow housing the elephant, birds, and small animals. Upon conclusion of the season it was reported that Soules had sold his equipment to Conley who announced he would tour in 1980 a tent under title of Circus Williams.

Happytime Circus, owned by Dave Twomey, out of Windsor, Calif. sported very colorful canvas and equipment. The show opened in the Santa Rosa area then moved into the San Diego area for early season dates. Later it played a number of California fairs and also the Nevada State Fair in Reno. The show had a blue colored big top with new orange and yellow sidewall. The seats and poles also had this color scheme. Trucks were painted white with red and yellow lettering.

Gary Strong Circus, using a 3 center pole, push pole type, big top played several dates in Kentucky. The show had one elephant. It reported two good days at Russellville, Kt. in May and also played in the Louisville suburbs.

In Canada, Martin & Downs Circus, opened May 6 at Omemee, Ontario. The big top was in its third season but there was a new cookhouse top with red and blue color scheme. The show moved on about 8 trucks and had a new sideshow truck and cookhouse trailer. It carried one elephant, Jewel, owned by Bill Morris. Vehicles were painted a deep orange with dark blue stripes and yellow stars.

Circus Gatini had two separate units, both under canvas, playing in Canada.

Leading the indoor circus field was again Ringling-Barnum with its two major units, Red, and Blue, and debuting a third under title of Monte Carlo.

Ringling Red featured the new 109th edition and was managed by Dean McMurray. New acts includ-

Kelly Bros. on lot at Pittsburg, Kan., 1979 season. Photo by Jim McRoberts.

truckers strike and encountered blockades at some truck stops causing inconvenience. Stebbings played two weeks around Chicago, then made fairs in Ohio, Michigan, West Virginia, Virginia, and the Carolinas. The big top, new last year, was an 85 ft. round with two 40's, one more middle section than before. A new color scheme of blue and white replaced the former red and white motif. One elephant was carried with the show while the Stebbings owned Polack Bros. herd of four joined the Gatti-Charles American Continental Circus for dates on the west coast. Upon completion of its fair dates in the Carolinas the Stebbings Circus returned to Florida for the winter.

Circus Girard was operated by Carl Conley, Gerard Soules, and Steve Schumaker. It opened June 11 at Stow, Ohio, near Akron, and played a 12 week season through Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. The show was transported on 4 trucks and had 5 living trailers. Big top was an 85 x 55, 2 center pole, red and white striped tent. One elephant, Betty, leased from Carson



Jungle Wonders Wild Animal Circus on lot of Trenton, Neb., Aug. 5, 1979. Big top in foreground was used as the sideshow-menagerie by Circus Vargas the previous year. Photo by Joe Fleming.



The Stebbing Royal European Circus opened early in February 1979 at the West Palm Beach, Fla. fair. Pfening photo.

ed the Canistrelli trampoline, Naughton's bears, while the new principal spec was titled "Circus Toyland". The elephant production number was "Gypsy Fandango" and aerial ballet, "Circus Can Can". The train at the beginning of the season had 38 cars and included a new flat to load the wardrobe wagons and concession office. The show opened Dec. 28-31, 1978 at Venice, Fla. quarters, then moved to St. Petersburg, Jan. 2-8, where the annual TV special was filmed. Gunther Gebel-Williams' trained tigers, leopards, and elephants continued as strong features of the Red unit.

The annual engagement at Madison Square Garden was played March 28-June 3 which was followed by the date at the Philadelphia Spectrum, June 5-17. Later the Red unit made the tour of the West Coast customary for the new edition each year. It was reported that the California stands were up 19.4 percent over the previous season. Several reviewers termed the current Red unit the strongest under the Ringling-Barnum banner since the canvas show of the 1950's. While in California state authorities charged the show for allowing Wally Naughton Jr., a juvenile, to work in the bear act. While in Inglewood, Calif., Coach No. 241 from the Monte Carlo Circus was added making a total of 39 cars in the Red train. It consisted of 4 stock cars, 1 shop-work car, 1 baggage (concession) 22 coaches,

This bright aluminum wagon was new on the Ringling-Barnum Red unit in 1979. Photo taken at Miami Beach, Fla. February 1979. Pfening photo.



The Franzen Bros. Circus animal semi-trainer is pictured in Pickerington, Ohio. Ed Jones photo.

2 tunnel cars, 8 flats, and 1 bi-level car. The season's final date was at Nassau, L.I., December 2, after which the show returned to its Venice, Fla. quarters.

The Ringling Blue unit opened in Venice, Jan. 26-28, played Lakeland, Fla., then on to Atlanta, Ga. for a Feb. 7-18 engagement. Snow hit on the final day in Atlanta causing business to be virtually nil and more of the white stuff at the following stand in Greensboro, N.C. caused cancellation of the first day's 2 and 6 p.m. performances. In Atlanta the performance, already weakened from the previous season, with the transfer of Elvin Bale's trapeze, wheel of death, and cannon acts to the Monte Carlo show and the absence of Benny Williams' outstanding elephant turn, was further hit by the hospitalization of Charley Baumann and consequent elimination temporarily of his tiger number. As a result of the decimated Blue performance the local newspaper columnists responded with the most adverse reviews of a Ringling show since the days of the "truck circus" of the late 1950's. It was generally concluded by visitors to the Ringling units throughout the country that the Red unit was by far the stronger of the two in 1979. The Blue train had a total of 40 railroad cars which consisted of 21 coaches, 8 flats, 4 stocks, 2 tunnel, 2 storage cars, 1 bi-level, 1 laundry car, and 1 dining car. Final stand of the season was at Cleveland, Ohio, Nov. 8-18. Then the show returned to Venice, Fla. where the new 110th edition would be framed. Elephant man Buckles Woodcock announced his resignation from the Ringling organization.

The long awaited Ringling third unit appeared in form of a 15 car railroad show titled Festival International du Cirque de Monte Carlo Spectacular. It was designed to play indoors on a one ring format,

presented under patronage of Prince Rainier III. The initial date was at Providence, R.I., Feb. 10-25. The program featured Elvin Bale, single trapeze, wheel of death, and rockets coming over from Ringling Blue plus a number of several outstanding European acts and personalities. Baker Brown was the unit's manager and Michael Gorman, performance director. The train's 15 cars consisted of 3 flats, 1 bi-level car, 1 stock car, 1 dining car, 1 generator car, and 8 coaches. Rail cars were painted aluminum with title in yellow decals. Wagon equipment was built from sea/land containers and was unlike other Ringling equipment.

The show was beautifully produced and drew rave reviews and praise throughout its route. A movie introduction with Prince Rainier speaking opened the show. The Monte Carlo played 2 and 3 day stands as well as some longer engagements on the order of the other units. The show moved across New York state and into Michigan during the first weeks of the season and business was termed as satisfactory. The route carried the new circus as far west as Iowa in April. Major dates came in St. Louis and Cleveland. Unfortunately the show for some unknown reason just didn't draw well enough for it to continue on the road and following its June 15-17 stand in Macon, Ga. the remainder of the route was cancelled and the Monte Carlo unit was sent to Circus World near

The freshly painted Ringling-Barnum Blue unit is shown being unloaded at the first road stand in Ft. Meyers, Fla. February 1979. Pfening photo.



Haines City, Fla. to complete the season. The show had been booked through September 3 and plans made for it to stay out possibly as late as November. It opened the Circus World stand in early July where the performance was presented under a Harold Barnes rented big top, a 150 ft. round with one 50 ft. middle. Final performance was given on November 11, then preparations were begun for some acts, equipment, etc. from Monte Carlo to be used for the opening of a Ringling-Barnum unit in Perth, Australia in early 1980.

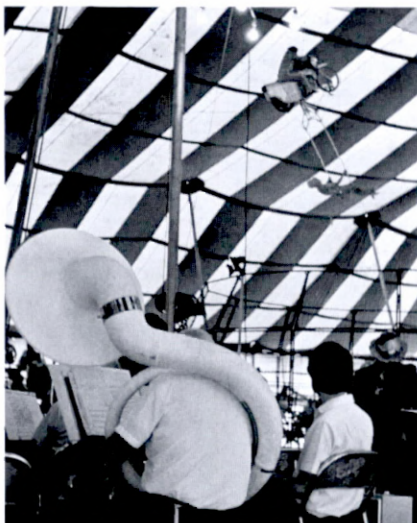
Mattel Inc., parent company of Ringling-Barnum, in its quarterly report to stockholders on May 5, 1979, said there was a 15 percent increase in operating profit for fiscal 1979. Circus World showed a 59 percent increase in revenues. For the first time in 7 years Circus World showed an operating profit before interest and depreciation. In March, Ringling-Barnum purchased three ice shows using titles of Ice Follies and Holiday on Ice from Wirtz Productions of Chicago.

Fans throughout the land were saddened at the failure of the traveling Monte Carlo show. For a few short months they were exhilarated that there were indeed three railroad circuses in the country but soon saddened that it couldn't continue. It was the first set-back for the Felds who to date had batted perfectly on all of their new ideas. Circus World was slow in making the grade but it had now done so and the appearance of the Monte Carlo Circus during the summer and fall of 1979 further boosted it to the peak of the theme parks.

Why had the travelling Monte Carlo failed? It was so widely acclaimed by professional theatrical reviewers and fans alike. It was circus production at its finest. No one really came up with a satisfactory answer why it didn't click. A few "Monday Morning Quarterbacks" opined it may have been the title, should have just called it Ringling-Barnum White to go along with the Red and Blue units. Others felt the expense of moving so often due to stands of short duration may have been too great. In any event, the short life of the beautiful Monte Carlo show, was heart felt by circus lovers throughout the land.

American Continental Circus, produced by Gatti-Charles, had a strong performance and opened its season in Fort Stockton, Texas, March 9. The show soon jumped to the west coast making dates in California, Oregon, and Washington. The show played Seattle under Police sponsorship only two

The live circus band returned to the Circus World Museum again in 1979. The air calliope is shown at top. Pfening photo.



The Emmett Kelly, Jr. Circus again played under a big top in Louisville, Ky., in August of 1979. Vachek motorcycle act is pictured. Bill Rhodes photo.

weeks following the Shrine circus. At Oakland, Calif., April 27-29, Bobby Stebbing and the 3 Polack elephants joined for a number of dates. The show also played the Shrine date in Los Angeles where attendance was hurt by the gasoline shortage. It was reported some stands were played in Canada. The show was in western Washington in September then headed south.

Bentley Bros., owned by Tommy Bentley and Chuck Clancy, was making a major headway in the indoor field. A semi was purchased from Circus Vargas early in the year. Throughout the season Bentley Bros. played both indoors and outdoors for fair dates. For its stand, July 12-15, at the Carthage fairgrounds in Cincinnati, the performance was presented in two rings under the red and white striped big top owned by George Hanneford Jr.

Carden-Johnson Circus, produced by Larry and Betty Carden, purchased from Bobby Gibbs some performing animals, a semi, and props. The show was in Milwaukee, Wis., Feb. 20-25 and played a route which took it to many areas of the country. It was in the San Francisco Cow Palace, May 4-6, for the Shrine date. While in Denver, Colo. in June the show lost 3 elephants from poisoning.

Hamid-Morton, a real pioneer in the indoor field, its title going back to the 20's and 30's, played dates

over most of the country, including Hartford, Conn. in February and Kansas City in March. The show used the John Cuneo's Hawthorne Circus Corp. tiger and elephant act in its performance.

Hubert Castle's Circus made a long route covering much of the U.S. and Canada with its season running from January through November. The show opened at Flint, Mich., Jan 13-21, played New Mexico dates in February, and March 3-11 was in Minneapolis. The Canadian tour began in Winnipeg, Man., May 5-12, for the 15th consecutive tour by Castle of the western provinces. In all Castle played 27 Shrine dates during the year. In July Castle told the press his show was slightly ahead in attendance over 1978. At the conclusion of the season Castle in an interview said he would winter near Sarasota at the Zerbini quarters instead of at Seagoville, Texas, near Dallas. He advised he had done his biggest business ever in 1979 with nearly 90 percent of his dates setting new record highs. Most of his dates were for the Shrine. His territory now includes a sweep across Canada from Victoria and Vancouver in British Columbia eastward and in the States his dates are from Oregon and Washington to New York. During the gas crunch Castle observed that many people were not going on long vacation trips but instead would visit his circus playing nearby. Castle's report was the most optimistic of any circus owner for the 1979 season.

Royal Hanneford Circus, owned by Tommy Hanneford, played indoor dates starting February 1 in White Plains, N.Y. Later stands came in Virginia and West Virginia and the show was in Chicago for a Shrine date in March. During the summer the show was in a permanent building for a lengthy engagement at the Americana Amusement Park in Middletown, Ohio. In July a No. 2 unit was formed to play the Coliseum Building at the Eastern States Exposition, West Springfield, Mass. In mid October Hanneford said he had purchased the equipment used on Circus Girard from Gerald Soules and advised in the deal he got the rolling stock, a big top, aluminum poles, seating, lights, rigging, and a calliope wagon. Hanneford said he planned to tour a No. 2 unit under canvas in 1980.

Veteran showman, James M. Cole, opened his All Star TV Circus, January 20, in Schickinny, Pa. to begin an 11 week tour, which was billed as his 41st annual. His route took the show through Pennsylvania and

The Coronas Family featured their new cannon on the Walter L. Main Circus in 1979. This photo was taken in Pleasure Ridge, Ky., by Bill Rhodes.



New York. It was Cole's 62nd anniversary in the entertainment field. His unit had 6 pieces of rolling stock and played mainly in school gyms and auditoriums.

Earl Tegge toured his TNT and Royal Olympic Circus during the 1979 season playing dates mainly in the mid west.

Col. Bill Voorheis opened his indoor show, Voorheis Bros., January 8, and played a route mainly in Michigan but also dates in Ohio, Indiana, and West Virginia.

Sam T. Polack Circus, the Polack name being another pioneer in the indoor field, opened in Louisville, Ky., Feb. 7-11, in a snow storm but the show still claimed its take was 30 percent over 1978 for the Shrine date in that city. In April at the Little Rock, Ark. Shrine date it was another record engagement for Polack with the SRO sign hung out for several performances.

Eddie Zachinni's Olympic Circus played the Shrine date in Macon, Ga., April 6-8 and during the latter part of the season played a number of fairs with an outdoor set-up using portable seating.

Ed Migley, producer/director, of Circus Odyssey used a one ring European format for several stands in New England and other areas.

International All Star Circus bucked heavy snow in the late winter and had to cancel its stand at Falls Church, Va., March 2, due to the white stuff. The show had a live band and played mainly in school gyms and recreational buildings for a full season.

L.N. Fleckles Circus played early season dates in Michigan. M & M Circus opened in Rochester, N.Y., Feb. 14-18 in extremely cold weather. The Bill Kaye Circus had a strong performance and presented a most impressive lineup at Jacksonville, Fla., Sept. 29-30.

Emmett Kelly Jr.'s show made a lengthy season playing all over the country and in the summer and fall appeared at several major fairs including Syracuse, N.Y.

Although the two Ringling-Barnum units and Monte Carlo provided their own promotion most of the indoor circuses played under auspices, the majority of which were fraternal organizations such as Shrine, Police Association and the like. Some indoor shows kept a set performance for the entire route, or at least most of it, others would change acts constantly with the program lineup tailored to fit the particular engagement. Some shows would play a continuous route on the order of a canvas show while others would appear sporadically throughout the circus year.

The Moscow Circus, promoted by Carlos Vasques,



Ringling-Barnum concession semi at Binghamton, N.Y., May 2, 1979. This beautifully decorated vehicle is operated by Sells-Floto Corp. and is used to deliver concessions to the various Ringling-Barnum stands during the season. Photo by Paul Horsman.

a South American, and managed by Arthur M. Concello, opened a United States tour Feb. 15-Mar. 4 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, then proceeded to the mainland March 8 for dates in Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. The tour was set by Vascom Inc. of Florida. After playing Birmingham, Ala. May 16-20 the show appeared in Atlanta, Ga., May 23-27, which turned out to be the final stand of the tour. Charlotte, N.C. had been scheduled but was cancelled. Unfortunately, attendance in Atlanta was mediocre and this was the pattern for most of this year's visit to the States. Although the show had a fine performance, marvelous band, and was well promoted, it just didn't draw, similar to the situation with the Monte Carlo road tour. Showmen and fans alike were baffled to find a reason. Steep inflation and the steadily dwindling of the family's purchasing power was probably the reason that so many showmen weren't smiling at the end of the 1979 circus season. The average American seemed to be tightening up on money spent for amusements. Despite the rather "so-so" season, most shows had made it through the

The midway of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus is shown in Gettysburg, Pa. during the CFA convention. Pfening photo.



year still intact and as 1979 passed into history it appeared they would be hitting the road again in 1980. As usual there were strong indications there would be some new circuses going out in 1981 as well as rumors that some of the old ones had played their last stand. Only time would tell.

The circus themed permanent parks or attractions overall had a fair year. Circus World in Haines City, Fla., operated by Ringling-Barnum, had its best season ever. Attendance during the summer and fall was aided by the Monte Carlo Circus' appearance under canvas. The Circus Hall of Fame in Sarasota had some very slow weeks in the winter and early spring months. The George Hanneford Jr. Circus, playing under canvas, made the first half of the year at the Hall of Fame. The Circus World Museum, as customary, had its own produced under canvas circus during the season. One of the strong features again was a live band and the menagerie tent format with cages displayed in the manner of the big rail shows of the past was retained. At the close of the year the Circus World Museum was promising a revival of the street parade during the July 4 celebration in Baraboo in 1980. A dispute of several years standing was resolved between Ringling-Barnum and the Ringling Circus Museum in Sarasota when the show reclaimed a number of tableau and baggage wagons which had been on display at the museum for 20 years. The museum was given clear title to enough wagons to properly continue their displays. What Ringling-Barnum would do with the reclaimed wagons was not announced prior to the end of the year.

Deaths of prominent circus personalities or fans during the year included Emma (Mama) Cristiani, Victor Julian, Jim Hodges, Henry Kyes, Richard Georgia, Emmett Kelly Sr., Frank Chicarella, Eddy Kuhn, Emile C. Hahn, Dolly Jacobs, Dick Clemens, John Cutler, John (Doc) Boyle, and Frank McCloskey.

The Bandwagon staff wishes to thank the many individuals who provided information or illustrations for this review of the 1979 circus season. Special thanks go to Don Marcks, editor of Circus Report, for the lists of circuses on the road during the season.

Circuses of 1979 (compiled by Don Marcks)

Under Canvas Shows

Circus Vargas, Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros., Carson & Barnes, Hoxie Bros., Great American, Circus Genoa, Jungle Wonders, George Hanneford Family Circus, Big John A. Strong, Franzen Bros., Roberts Bros., Kelly Bros., Circus Girard, Stebbing Royal European, Happytime, Dr. Pepper, Martin & Downs (Canada), Gatini (2 units) (Canada), and Puck's Circus (Canada).

Outdoor-Indoor Shows — Playing buildings or outside facilities (on some occasion some have played under canvas)

Ringling-Barnum Red Unit, Ringling-Barnum Blue Unit, Monte Carlo, Royal Hanneford, Hamid-Morton, Carden-Johnson, M & M Circus, Garden Bros., Cole's All Star TV Circus, Sam T. Polack, Europorama, Wenatchee Youth Circus, Holiday Hippodrome, American Continental, Hubert Castle International, Hubler International, Emmett Kelly Jr., TNT & Royal Olympic, Beck's Cicoroma, Bentley Bros., Funs-A-Poppin Circus, Great Y. Circus, International All Star, Voorheis Bros., Circus Odyssey, L.N. Fleckles and Bill Kay.

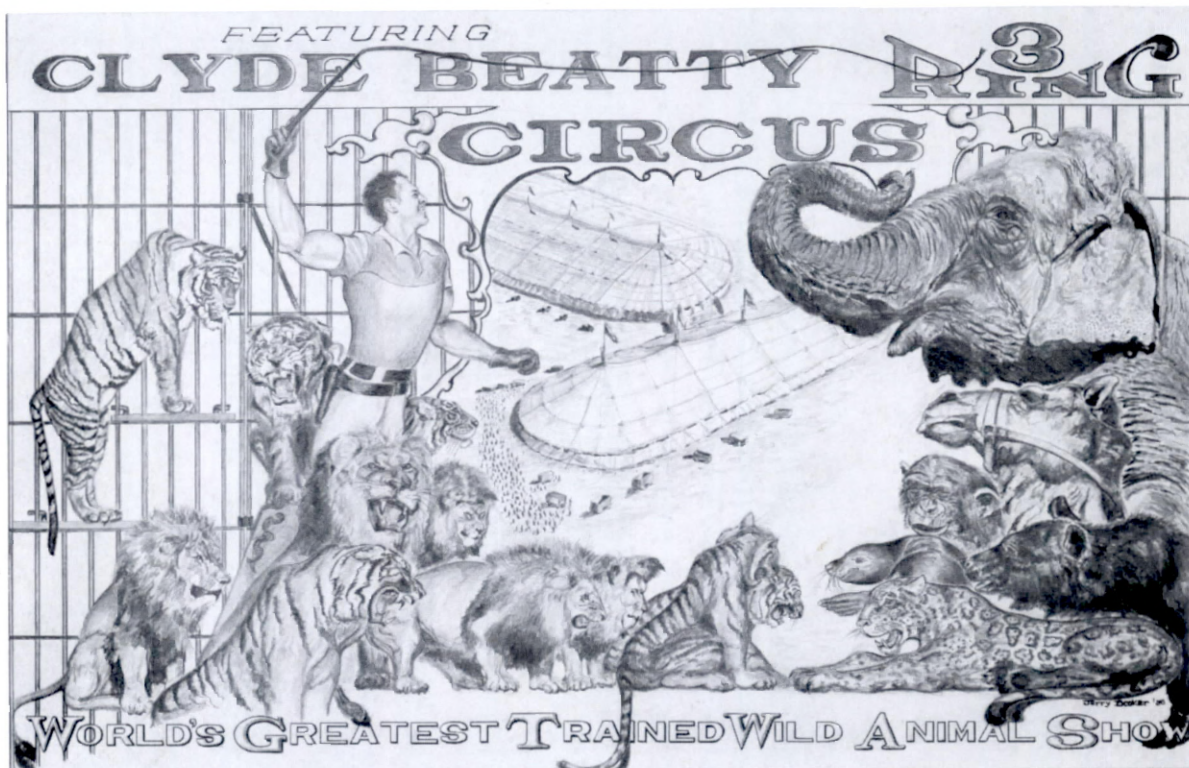


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Jerry Booker and Clyde Beatty at preview of model circus train, May 25, 1955, Redwood City, California.



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